



**Opening Statement
Nominations Hearing for Balash, Glick, McIntyre, and Nelson
Chairman Lisa Murkowski
September 7, 2017**

Good morning and welcome, everyone. The Committee will come to order.

We're here today to start off the September session by considering four nominations – two for the Department of the Interior and two for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Our Interior nominees are Joe Balash to be the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management and Ryan Nelson to be the Solicitor. Our FERC nominees are Rich Glick and Kevin McIntyre, who is slated to be designated as the Commission's Chairman upon confirmation.

I want to thank all four nominees for their willingness to serve, or continue serving, our country. Each of you has been nominated for a critical leadership position at an agency or Department that – well it might not be obvious to all – are very important and has the power to affect millions of American lives.

As we have noted here many times before, FERC has significant reach into the national economy. According to the Congressional Research Service, the value of energy commodities flowing through FERC-regulated wires and pipes is approximately three percent of the nation's GDP. Of course, what those commodities go on to fuel and power make up an even larger component of our broader economy.

Just before the August state work period, we approved two FERC nominees and restored a working quorum for the Commission. After six months with just one confirmed commissioner, the nominees before us today will provide this agency with a full complement of five members. They have their work cut out for them, as they address a significant backlog of pending matters, but with them FERC will be back up to speed with a full roster.

I'm confident that Mr. McIntyre will be a capable Chairman upon his confirmation. He has significant experience and strong qualifications for the role. And Mr. Glick, who is Senator Cantwell's General Counsel here on the Committee, is certainly well-known to many of us. I will let Senator Cantwell speak to his background and qualifications, but I personally want to thank you for your service to this panel—including your role in

shaping our bipartisan energy bill, and many other matters. I truly appreciate the working relationship that we have had and what you have contributed to the Committee.

Given the extraordinary scope of the Interior Department's responsibilities – including its administration of more than a quarter of the land in our nation, and about two-thirds of the land in the Alaska – we also recognize that it is past time that Secretary Zinke and Deputy Secretary Bernhardt have the help that they need.

I welcome the nomination of Ryan Nelson, of Idaho, a westerner and a seasoned General Counsel. Mr. Nelson is returning to Washington, DC to resume his already-notable public service, this time as Solicitor. Senator Risch will have a few words as he will introduce him shortly, so I will focus my own introduction on our fourth nominee, and that's Mr. Joe Balash, of the great state of Alaska.

I'm delighted to have Joe before the Committee today. He's a fellow Alaskan, which should be enough to convince everyone to just vote yes on his nomination. Mr. Balash hails from North Pole –not *the* North Pole, but from North Pole, Alaska.

He is currently serving as Senator Sullivan's Chief of Staff, he previously ran Alaska's Department of Natural Resources. I've worked closely with him in both of those roles and I truly cannot say enough about his understanding and certainly knowledge of these issues. I think he will be an excellent Assistant Secretary overseeing the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and several other key agencies within Interior.

Senator Sullivan did want to be here to introduce Mr. Balash today, but that wasn't possible due to a death in his family, so I will read a short statement that Senator Sullivan wrote, before submitting his full statement for the record. Senator Sullivan says:

“Joe Balash currently serves as my Chief of Staff. And while we are sorry to lose him, the job that Secretary Zinke has tasked him with is one that I believe he's uniquely qualified for.

“Joe was my deputy commissioner of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources, and then he became the Commissioner of DNR. Alaska's DNR manages one of the largest portfolios of land, water, oil, gas, renewables, timber, and minerals in the world.

“Responsible development of Alaska's resources requires working closely with all groups that have a stake in Alaska's lands and waters, including environmentalists, conservationists, hunters, tribes, energy companies and citizens.

“Joe understands how to work to develop our resources, while always understanding that our lands sustain us and stringent environmental safeguards are absolutely necessary for all Americans.

“Joe Balash is a hard worker, a great father and husband, and a good friend, I hope that this committee can vote him out favorably to be considered by the full Senate.”

Well, Joe, like Senator Sullivan, I certainly look forward to having you at the Department of the Interior—I know a lot of Alaskans, and a lot of westerners, feel the same way. So again, thank you for your willingness to step up in this capacity.

Now, to a little bit of the business.

For members who will have questions for our nominees, I will be here for as long as possible today. I’m bouncing in and out of committees, as I know a lot of members are, but if any members have additional questions after the hearing, questions for the record will be due at the close of business today. And, finally, I would advise members to be prepared to report these nominees as soon as possible.

With that, I turn to Senator Cantwell for her opening remarks. After that we will have brief remarks from Senator Risch to introduce Ryan Nelson, and then we will swear in our witnesses.

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